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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 000344

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ILLEGAL ADOPTIONS IN EGYPT

REF: CAIRO 0092 AND PREVIOUS

¶11. (SBU) Summary: For the past 16 months, the Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) has been investigating cases of illegal adoptions in Egypt (see ref). Coptic priests, nuns and doctors remain key players in the illegal adoptions. Cases of illegal adoptions continue with the most recent announcement by Egyptian prosecutors on February 16 of the trial of an American couple and six Egyptians in Alexandria. In 2009, an Egyptian court in Cairo sentenced eleven individuals, including four Americans and a Coptic nun to two to five years in prison for baby trafficking. End Summary.

"Rogue" Priests

¶12. (SBU) The FPU has confirmed 31 cases where children have been illegally adopted in Egypt and either taken to the United States or raised in Egypt. The earliest confirmed case by the FPU is from 1989, although one Coptic priest admitted the practice has been going on since 1976. This particular priest also provided other insights during an interview with the Fraud Prevention Manager (FPM) on February 11, 2010. He stated that the majority of the priests involved in illegal adoptions are very charismatic, have numerous followers and are consumed with their position of power as leaders of the Coptic community. According to this priest, the "big" personalities of these individuals have prompted them to engage in activities not condoned by many others in the Coptic Church. He mentioned that the Church is more than capable of raising and educating unwanted Coptic children. He added that in Alexandria, literally hundreds of babies are given to childless families and only a few have been taken out of Egypt.

Unscrupulous Doctors

¶13. (SBU) The cases of illegal adoptions generally involve doctors falsely attesting to the delivery of the newborn for the alleged biological parents. The letter from the doctor is used to acquire a genuine Egyptian birth certificate and sometimes a passport. The FPU confirmed that in many instances the doctors receive payment in return for their false statements and/or procurement of newborns. The FPU linked one doctor to cases as far back as 1995 and as recent as 2008. The doctor's fees ranged from USD 100 for a newborn to USD 5000 for personal delivery of a newborn to the United States (see 09 Cairo 207 and previous). FPU cooperation with Egyptian

State Security Investigative Services (SSIS) led to the arrest of this doctor in May 2009.

Americans to Stand Trial Again

¶4. (SBU) On February 16, Egyptian prosecutors charged two Americans and six Egyptians with forgery, illegal adoption and baby trafficking. Another American in the United States was also identified and charged in absentia. Egypt's Prosecutor General identified the Egyptians as two priests, two doctors, a civil servant and an engineer. All, but two of these individuals are currently fugitives. In September of 2009, an Egyptian court sentenced four Americans and seven Egyptians to two to five years in prison for baby trafficking and forgery.

Comment

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¶5. (SBU) Most of the illegal adoptions confirmed by the FPU have involved childless couples desperate for children. However, in some cases the FPU is unable to trace the whereabouts of the child. Confirmed cases of unscrupulous doctors raises concern for the newborns involved in such illegal adoptions. Post is proposing stronger language for the Country Specific Information for Egypt warning against attempting to illegally adopt in Egypt.

Scobey
SCOBAY